Auburn. Theo. Sem. August 9. 1842.

Meſsrs. Wells. Walsh & Trimble, Com. &c.

Dear Brethren.

Your letter to the 'Society of Inquiry' in behalf of the 'Aſsociation for benevolent purposes' is received. It would seem properly to fall under the notice of a different society in our Institution, but as many of us are members of both, it was committed to the regular Committee of Correspondence.

We are glad to know, brethren, that you are practically engaged in behalf of the World lying in Sin around you. Certainly, it is our duty, who are to be its ministers, to do more than inquire how much is to be done. If simple inquiry is all we propose, even that is needleſs. We know enough, already, to be satisfied that the work is great, beyond our utmost ability to accomplish it. It is needful, however, that our hearts should be aroused by a more familiar knowledge of the misery which exists by reason of Sin; and, especially, that we may know where the demand for alleviating it, is most pressing; and where we can most effectually answer the demand. In searching out these things we have doubtleſs been somewhat successful. It will not be very hard for us to find some place where we may lay out our resources in the cause of Christ. But, probably, we have made but little experiment of what we are personally able to do in the great undertaking we are to aſsume. We see what ought to be done; and we can tell, what we wish to do, but we do not know so well what we are able to do. In such an aſsociation as you have formed this, too, can be investigated.

It would be gratifying to us if we could furnish such valuable hints as you desire. It appears best to us, in attempting it, to give you a brief account of an association existing among us, somewha similar to your own.

In the fall of the year 1840. Mr Howell, agent for the american Tract Society in Western N. York, called to consult with the students in the Seminary. He stated his object to be, an enlistment of our sympathies and aid in the business of Tract Distribution. As an encouragement to us he generously offered to supply us with the Tracts necessary to our operations. The consequence was the formation of the "Tract Laborers' Association." About fifty of the brethren entered into the organization and drew up a constitution to guide them in their efforts. In that Constitution several objects are proposed.

1. To promote the skill and devotion of the members of the Association in the work of doing good.
2. That a more decided religious influence may issue from the Seminary upon the surrounding population.
3. To benefit those who are not reached by other means of grace; and to arouse Churches and individuals to like efforts.

The members pledge themselves to labor as far as possible in distributing Tracts during vacations.

It is now nearly two years since the formation of our Society and time has been afforded to observe the influence of it. Undue diffidence in our talents for such work and lack of faith in God's promises have kept us back from much which might have been done. But we have encouraging facts, which fully show the excellence of the enterpri to which we are pledged. — It has invested us with a sense of our responsibility to God and man as we have gone out from the Seminary to visit home and friends. Opportunities generally occur along the route, for presenting Tracts to Strangers and conversing with them on the subject of Religion. This, of course, would draw upon us attention and require a carefulness of deportment, easily put off in journeying. So, at home, or wherever we are located, our office creates an expectancy among the people, that something for their spiritual good will be attempted when we arrive, and the expectation furnishes a motive for satisfying it. — Of course we have no room in this letter for facts which testify the worth of our association to those whom we try to benefit. Despite of discouraging suggestions, many of our number have boldly done their duty. And rarely have they reported any unhandsome treatment by those whom they tried to benefit. They have universally found Travellers by R. Road & Canal counting it even a kindness which furnished them the entertaining pages of religious Tracts and led them into interesting conversation on religious Truth. Cases of decided and solemn impression produced, in this way, upon a light-minded company have been related at our meetings. Some have given their entire vacations to this employment, and many more have rescued their leisure hours from waste and devoted them to the interests of needy souls around them.

It is not an unimportant result, also, that individual Churches have become interested in the Tract Distributors and proposed to adopt some of them into the place of Sons, for the good work which they had wrought among them. Why should this not, especially in the present embarassment of the times, become a favorite plan of educating ministers? Would it not ensure many competent and effecient ones and sift out the worldlings and idlers? Some process like it is, too sadly, needed.

The meetings of our association are held at the beginning and end of each term at the first of the term ~~to~~ reports are brought in of labor performed during the previous vacation. We meet at the close of the term to encourage each other to faithful service; advise in regard to fields of labor; and to seek the blessing of God upon us. These meetings are very useful, and, indeed, indispensable. A fact which we have omitted, might be mentioned in conclusion, showing the interest already felt in us abroad. A young man in a neighboring village, dying a short time since, left a legacy of fifty dollars to be paid to some one of our number, judged worthy of it, who should spend a certain portion of his vacations in Tract Distribution. Such are some of the beginnings of our Tract D. Association.

In reply to your inquiry about our missionary spirit, we cannot speak very encouragingly. It is but poorly cherished by us. But few have decided for foreign fields. Some of us are setting our faces Westward and we hope with the true zeal of Missionaries. But we forget easily our obligation to go forth irrespective of personal convenience wherever the finger of Providence shall point us.

The news which reaches us of the interest felt in pagan lands, by our Princeton brethren rejoices us, while it reproaches us for want of a similar spirit. Abound, dear brethren, more and more in this apostolic temper of soul and by your good works, provoke us also to emulate them.

Affectionately Yours.
W. E. Knox
J. Walker } Committee
O. P. Conklin &c

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